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ABSTRACT

Prepared as part of a series applying recent research in oral and written communication instruction to classroom practice, this booklet provides teachers, administrators, and curriculum planners with suggestions for ways to develop more effective oral communication instruction in the content areas as well as speech classes. Following a brief introduction, the first major section of the booklet examines some basic assumptions about oral communication and speech instruction and reviews several premises for direct oral communication instruction. The second section presents six approaches that might be used in developing oral communication instruction: (1) functional, (2) audience, (3) skills, (4) activities, (5) contexts, and (6) models. The remaining sections discuss each approach in detail and provide activities illustrating each. (FL)

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Oral Communication Instruction in Middle and High School Classes

By Philip A. Gray

The Talking and Writing Series, K-12: Successful Classroom Practices

ED233385

The purpose of this series is to provide information to assist teachers and curriculum planners at all grade levels in improving communication skills across the major disciplines.

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PREFACE

During the past decade, teachers, education administrators and researchers, and the general public have become increasingly concerned about students' ability to communicate. This broad public concern for improvement in education led to the enactment of Title II, Basic Skills Improvement Act, Public Law 95-561. The Basic Skills legislation encourages Federal, State, and local education agencies to utilize " . . . all available resources for elementary and secondary education to improve instruction so that all children are able to master the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and effective communication, both written and oral." Section 209 of the act specifically authorizes the Secretary of Education to collect and analyze information about the results of activities carried out under Title II. Thus, improved instruction in the basic communication skills—speaking, listening, and writing—has become the focus of programs and research projects throughout the country.

The booklets in this series, *The Talking and Writing Series, K-12: Successful Classroom Practices*, provide information to assist teachers and curriculum planners at all grade levels to improve communication skills across all major disciplines. Developed under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, the 12 booklets apply recent research in oral and written communication instruction to classroom practice. They contain descriptions of teaching practices; summaries and analyses of pertinent theories and research findings; practical suggestions for teachers; and lists of references and resources. Also included is a booklet on inservice training which suggests how the series can be used in professional development programs.

The booklets were developed through the efforts of an Editorial Advisory Committee comprised of 14 professionals in both the academic and research areas of written and oral communication education. The group worked with the sponsoring agency, the Department of Education's Basic Skills Improvement Program, and Dingle Associates, Inc., a professional services firm.

The committee members, in consultation with the Department of Education staff, chose issues and developed topics. Ten of the 14 committee members authored papers. The committee reviewed the papers and provided additional expertise in preparing the final booklets, which were edited and designed by Dingle Associates.

We are grateful to the committee members, advisors, and all others who contributed their expertise to the project. The committee members were:

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It is hoped that the booklets in this series will be valuable to classroom and administrative professionals in developing or restructuring their communication skills programs. They may also be useful to community and parent groups in their dialogue with members of the educational system. The ultimate benefit of this project, however, will be realized in our children's enhanced ability to communicate, both orally and in written language.

Sherwood R. Simons
Project Officer

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ORAL COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

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INTRODUCTION

Most of us spend so much time talking and listening to other people that we take the process of communication for granted. The notion that oral communication behavior is based on "natural" abilities is easy to accept. After all, most young children are reasonably fluent when they begin school, and by the time they are teenagers, they have some understanding of grammar. If we suggest that it is important for schools to provide formal instruction in 'talking," parents and other teachers might well respond: "Why? Children do enough talking already!"

But how effective are these children at structuring messages, analyzing communicative situations, applying standards to messages, or understanding the purposes and effects of their communications? These same parents and teachers would readily agree that students "talk but do not talk well." Consider, for example, such messages as, "But, Mother, everyone's going to be there (or wearing it or doing it)," "It's not my fault I got a D. My teacher hates me," or "I never heard you give that assignment." Parents wonder how to "get through" to the 16-year-old who leaves the house for a job interview or social function dressed in crusty jeans and that favorite old sweat shirt. Also consider the problems middle school students often have in communicating with peers and parents, or the impact of television viewing habits on their attitudes and behaviors. Such consideration may make it easier for us to accept the notion that although children know "how to talk," they need to learn how *to communicate more effectively*.

We, as parents, teachers, and employers, are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that (1) because oral communication is so pervasive and necessary for effective functioning in society and (2) because of the relationship between effective oral communication and academic, social, and vocational success, it is essential that schools provide formal instruction in basic oral communication skills.

That oral communication skills are being taught informally in U.S. schools is evident, even to a casual observer. Certainly, elementary school teachers use such activities as show-and-tell, storytelling, group projects, and oral reports extensively. Middle and high school teachers provide classroom experiences in speaking before an audience, participating in discussions, and other forms of oral expression. Mostly, however, oral communication skills are seen only as tools to learn subject content. Certainly, such indirect instruction may serve a useful function, but research on instructional methods clearly demonstrates that direct instruction in teaching oral communication skills produces significantly improved performance. Even though we are already teaching many communication skills informally, we need to structure and focus student attention specifically on those skills.

WHO ARE *WE*? By now, you may have assumed that this booklet was written for the speech teacher. Of course, I hope that my comments are of interest to these teachers, but the booklet's primary purpose is to provide the classroom teacher, the curriculum director, or the school administrator with some information and suggestions that can be used to develop more

effective instruction in oral communication skills in English classes, social studies, vocational education—as well as in speech classes. We know, for example, that instruction in writing cannot be confined to English class if students are to become effective writers. It is not enough to require simply that students submit written reports in other classes without focusing their attention on the writing process. To be sure, both teachers' and students' attention must be focused on the communication process if students' communication skills (writing *and* reading, speaking *and* listening) are to improve.

Oral communication skills are the tools used to interact and solve problems, as are the skills of reading, writing, and computation. But, as is true of these skills, formal instruction in oral communication must go beyond basic skills to include increasingly complex matters of substance, form, and function. This booklet is not intended to be prescriptive, but it aims to provide a clearer understanding of these communication forms and functions so that you can develop your own units of oral communication instruction for your classes.

In a very real sense, many of us are already teaching oral communication skills.[1] The FFA (Future Farmers of America) advisor, for example, probably teaches more parliamentary procedure than any other staff teacher. The athletic coach spends a great deal of time on group (team) communications. Business teachers discuss sales and interview techniques. The history teacher devotes time to oral history and the oral tradition in society. School programs would be more effective, however, if each staff member examined closely which oral communication skills were already being taught, which ought to be taught, and how direct instruction of these skills could be integrated into each subject area.[2]

SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

For many, the words "oral communication" and "speech" tend to evoke images of debate and public speaking activities; and in some ways these images are appropriate. Many speech classes, for example, present speech as an activity or series of activities which seem to be ends in themselves. (The result of instruction appears to be a student skilled in giving a speech or orally reading literature.) But these images represent only a few of the end products of a complex thought and behavioral process requiring use of diverse learned skills.

Oral communication is *an interactive process involving observation and thought in talking, listening, and responding*. It is a process involving both physical and cognitive behaviors among and between people. It neither ends nor begins with the message source (a speaker), but involves an interaction

[1] For a discussion of the use of basic communication skills in various subject areas, see the booklet in this series by Christopher J. Thaiss, *Learning Better Learning More: In the Home and Across the Curriculum*.

[2] See also the booklet, *Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again: Integrating the Language Arts*, by R. R. Allen and Robert W. Kellner, in this series.

among message sources and receivers (listeners) with both participating in the exchange. In this sense, oral communication is a primary learning mode in every class.

Direct instruction in teaching communication process skills is based on a number of premises, including:

- **Effective communication requires continued attention.**

  Those of us who are parents fondly remember the years during which we repeated words over and over until our children delighted us by articulating them. This was followed by months of the parent pointing to people and objects and naming them for the child. From this, we moved to phrases and sentences. Unfortunately, by the time the child was ready to begin school, we began to restrict parental guidance to corrective instruction (e.g., "Don't interrupt." "Let someone else talk." "Say hello to Grandma." "I don't ever want to hear you use that word again.") As teachers, we often confine instruction in the same ways by correcting language structure and focusing on vocabulary and fluency problems, forgetting or ignoring what it is a child may be trying to accomplish through oral communication. Why do parents and teachers assume that a child's oral communication skills are fully developed once he or she has learned to talk? We do not assume that a child who has mastered "Chopsticks" is an accomplished pianist.

- **Oral communication processes can be taught.**

  In addition to the research which demonstrates that communication instruction has beneficial results and that students are responsive to such instruction, we need only to look at the U.S. marketplace to confirm the value and effectiveness of communication instruction. Generations of business persons have paid generously for such products as the Dale Carnegie course in public speaking and corporate programs which teach listening skills. Churches, mental health centers, and family service agencies offer programs on family, marital, and parenting communication.

- **As children grow and mature, their communications change and become increasingly complex.**

  Even such a "simple" event as meeting a stranger becomes more complex and difficult the older one gets. A young child may easily say, "Hi," and begin playing comfortably with another child, or just as easily ignore the other. The young adult, however, becomes involved in a complex analysis of a set of variables involving

social customs and rituals, consideration of the effects of a relationship, concern for appearances, and so on. The situation can become so complex for some that they go to extreme lengths to avoid meeting new people. It is important to note, however, that we should not assume that communication changes are always developmental or sequential in nature. Much of what we teach is repetitious and requires a return to skills demonstrated earlier, but which need to be reexamined. For example, self-confidence is not a sequential or durable behavioral development. A fourth-grader may be quite open and free in communicating. By eighth grade the same child may become "closed" and refuse to engage in many communication situations.

- **Communication is essential to our personal development.**

  For example, oral communication is related to our thought processes[1] and is a means for developing a sense of self and one's relationships to others. In a very real sense, the "basic skills" of reading, computation, and oral and written communication are the means by which we solve problems: They each provide us with differing symbolic strategies.

As a human behavioral process, oral communication is a complex phenomenon. Although all may agree that communication is learned and can be taught, the problem is deciding on which behaviors and cognitions to teach within a limited time period. And in developing instructional activities, we must make decisions about which instructional objectives need to be met.[2]

The next section describes a variety of approaches to teaching oral communication which can be used in most classrooms. Examples of activities illustrating the differences among the approaches are included.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING ORAL COMMUNICATION

The following approaches to teaching oral communication have in common the assumption that:

> *We utilize oral communication skills to communicate with specific persons in a given situation for a purpose.*

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[1] See the booklet in this series, *Thinking Together: Language Interaction in Children's Reasoning*, by Jana Staton.

[2] For a discussion of critical communication skills, see the booklet in this series, *Talking and Writing: Building Communication Competence*, by Donald L. Rubin and Kenneth J. Kantor.

The key words are:

utilize	skills
communicate	persons
situation	purpose

Each word refers to a different approach that might be used in developing oral communication instruction. Each academic discipline seems to need to develop its own terminology or "jargon," and this is certainly true for speech communication. Consequently, I have tried to compromise between "jargon" and the key words by labeling the approaches as follows:

- **Functional approach**: We communicate for a *purpose*.
- **Audience approach**: We communicate with specific *persons*.
- **Skills approach**: We utilize oral communication *skills*.
- **Activities approach**: We *communicate* (focus is on the observable components of communication).
- **Contexts approach**: We communicate in a given *situation*.
- **Models approach**: We *utilize* (focus is on the process).

Although each is discussed as a separate approach, each is a part of an interrelated whole. In this sense, any approach can be valid if it is properly developed and establishes an appropriate focus for the instructional activity. As Rubin and Kantor point out in their booklet, *Talking and Writing: Building Communication Competence*, an effective communicator understands the relationship among communication functions, audiences, contexts, and activities and adapts his or her style and strategies for a given situation.

Certainly, we should become familiar with the different approaches to teaching oral communication, as well as with instructional theories and methodologies appropriate for each approach. We should also experiment and combine differing approaches. The final goal of all instruction is to expand the student's repertoire of communication experiences and to increase communication choices available to the student in any given situation.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

The functional approach to teaching oral communication is based on the premise that people communicate for a purpose. Effective communication

is most likely to result if communicators use various skills and strategies with an understanding of the expectations of each participant in the communication interaction.

Examining the aims or purposes of oral discourse is an important part of the traditional approach to speech. For example, we use the functional approach when discussing differences between informative and persuasive speeches. Mass communication courses in broadcast programming often provide units of instruction which distinguish among news and entertainment (information) and persuasion as a function of broadcasting. As another example, union members feel that their representatives have failed in contract negotiations if the results do not provide members with any new benefits.

Because the purposes or functions of communication can be as varied as the variety of persons who communicate, the Speech Communication Association Project Task Force (Allen and Brown, 1976) recommends that teachers structure communication functions into five groups that represent the dominant uses of communication today. These groups include communication acts for informing, controlling, imagining, feeling, and ritualizing.

- **Informing** communication acts primarily provide and/or secure information. These acts focus on such behaviors as questioning, answering, naming, acknowledging, judging, justifying, stating opinion, demonstrating, explaining, describing, stating relationships, and so on.

- **Controlling** communication acts affect attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and/or respond to such communications. Generally, we attempt to control through such acts as commanding, responding, accepting, refusing, rejecting, persuading, arguing, threatening, warning, and bargaining.

- **Imagining** communication acts place the participant in imaginary situations. Specific acts could include speculation, telling stories, playing roles, fantasizing, and theorizing.

- **Feeling** communication acts produce or express affective responses. Such acts satisfy or please. They include commiserating, blaming, apologizing, expressing joy or sorrow, emotional catharsis, producing and responding to "escaping" forms of entertainment, and seeking communication which provides vicarious experiences.

- **Ritualizing** communication acts establish and maintain social relationships and facilitate communication interactions. These acts include greetings, taking turns in communicating, leave-taking, demonstrating social amenities as an audience member or communication participant, playing verbal games, and providing and responding to established communication procedures.

Obviously, this category system is somewhat arbitrary, but it becomes less so if teachers and students recognize that any given communication act may have more than one purpose. For example, it may be useful to examine communications in terms of primary and secondary functions. Also obvious is the fact that a course which focuses only on communication functions without some consideration for communication skills and activities could be very superficial. Regardless of the methodologies used in teaching with a functional approach, it is essential that students recognize communication as an interactive process. Both the source and the recipient of a message participate in the process for a purpose, and many times participant purposes differ.

The functional approach to studying and teaching communication has several advantages for specific instructional situations. This approach is much simpler, for example, than attempting to structure by context or attempting to deal with multiple perspectives implied by an audience approach. Furthermore, the functional approach can be applied in various instructional settings. Elementary teachers can use the approach to create greater awareness of the importance of communication and to focus student attention on purposes in a variety of contexts, as well as to provide basic skills instruction in a wide range of subject areas. Parents can use the approach to help improve children's communication by focusing on specific communication acts and the effects of those behaviors without the extensive preparation or study that might be required for understanding and using other approaches.

Another advantage of the functional approach—and perhaps the most significant advantage—is the fact that communication functions are not unique to oral communication. Reading and writing, as well as talking and listening, can all be taught through a functional format. This provides the teacher with the opportunity to integrate basic skills instruction within one classroom with numerous reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities used to develop communication skills. The State of Wisconsin Bulletin 2132 provides examples as to how teachers in grades 9 and 10 can integrate basic skills instruction in the English classroom using this approach.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to using the functional approach. Functions or purposes suggest analysis of people's intentions and motivations, which are difficult to discern under the best of circumstances. In addition to the problem of clarity of purpose, there is the somewhat arbitrary nature of the category system, itself. Teachers and students must not focus attention on identifying and classifying purposes as much as on developing functional skills and recognizing that communication is purposeful.

The following pages describe two activities which exemplify instructional activities based on the functional approach. One activity involves preparing and presenting a public (classroom) performance. The other is an interview situation. To better illustrate the differences among the various approaches described in this booklet, these same activities (a public presentation and an interview situation) will be presented after the narrative describing each of the approaches. Each activity description will include a discussion of the differences in planning, grading, classroom setup, and other aspects brought about by using the different approaches.

Informational interview assignment

Purpose: This assignment focuses on the process of securing information through face-to-face interviews.

Objectives: The activities should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- developing a plan for securing information;
- using information to construct a message (report);
- using techniques for purposeful questioning;
- presenting information (report);
- dealing with ambiguity; and
- distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information.

Materials: The teacher should prepare a handout detailing the objectives and specifics of the assignment, including procedures, deadlines, and grading basis.

Procedures: Assuming that the teacher has discussed the functions or purposes for communicating, this assignment can be introduced as a project designed to focus on securing information. The purposes and objectives of the project are presented, and each student is assigned a specific topic area (for example, careers, community services agencies, local government services, local recreational opportunities). These topics should be selected so that local people must be interviewed to obtain the appropriate information. At least three people should be interviewed. Students, also, should be required either to develop and write a report or make an oral presentation before the class. In either case, the bulk of the report should be based on the interviews, and all interview notes should be turned in with the report (or at the time of the oral presentation).

Grading: Assessment should focus on the amount and relevance of the information obtained from the interviews. The interview notes and report should be included in the grade.

Classroom Setting: Since all but the final report is to be done outside of class, no unusual setups or class arrangements are necessary.

Subject Areas: Assignment topics can be tailored for any subject area; for example, community history, local economy, health and physical activity opportunities, and so on.

A simulation in persuasion

(This activity was suggested by a simulation developed by Dr. Charles Larson at Northern Illinois University.)

Purpose: The activity focuses on persuading others through advertising.

Objectives: The simulation should provide each student the opportunity and responsibility for:

- using persuasive concepts and techniques;
- analyzing audiences;
- using presentational skills;
- analyzing effects of the presentation;
- planning strategies;
- developing and implementing persuasive messages (advertising); and
- using such reinforcement techniques as image identification, color coding, word choice, and others.

Materials: Analysis of effects and grading are based, in part, on dollars earned. Thus, in addition to a handout detailing the assignment, the teacher should ditto or buy fake dollars.

Procedures: The teacher should precede the simulation with a discussion of the functions of persuasion, analysis of audience attitudes and opinions, and persuasive techniques, as well as simulation objectives and procedures. Students should be divided into groups of three to five. Each group is to develop a print medium advertising campaign to market a product.

The groups should market the same type of product for the same price. Products, for example, might include such school-related articles as hats, T-shirts, and posters. Or the product might be an evening's entertainment event, such as a dance, a special musical group, a play, or a movie. The marketing campaigns should consist of a specific series of print materials, such as flyers and posters. The emphasis should be on persuasiveness, not on the professional quality of materials.

Ideally, another class or another section of the same course should serve as customers. Each customer should be given enough money to make two choices. For example, if the product costs $5, give each customer $7.50. They can then give their first choice group $5 and second-choice group $2.50 after looking at each group's advertising materials.

The simulation provides a stronger educational experience if each group

is required to write a report on its strategies and results. Follow up activities might include adapting the same advertising campaign for radio and/or television commercials and inviting guests from advertising agencies to speak to the class.

Grading: In addition to the dollars earned from the ad campaign, the teacher could award additional, set dollar amounts for attendance and participation, as well as for the report. Each group can be required to distribute among its members all or a percentage of the total dollars earned. These dollars can then be converted to grades.

Classroom Setting: Groups should have opportunities to plan and work on their advertising campaigns during some class hours. This would require arranging the classroom into separate group settings. Since these sessions could be somewhat "noisy," it would be appropriate if other teachers were informed of the days on which groups would be working.

Subject Areas: The simulation could be adapted for many courses, but would be particularly useful in art, journalism, speech, social studies, and some business courses.

AUDIENCE APPROACH

An examination of college speech curricula and many high school speech programs suggests that focusing on different audiences is a common approach to structuring curricula and courses in speech. Examples of courses in such programs include public speaking, group discussion, interpersonal communications, and various media courses. Whereas the functional approach focuses on the purposes for communicating, this approach examines communication in terms of the relative numbers of participants in the process. The range extends from self as audience (one person) through mass communication situations. That this is a useful and suitable approach to focusing oral communication instruction is supported by the existence of important differences in communication strategies and skills. These strategies and skills vary according to:

- the number of participants,
- the degree of distance/physical relationship among the participants, and
- the extent to which participants can produce immediate feedback.

The generally recognized continuum used to classify audience differences includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and media (mass) audiences.

Intrapersonal communication

This is the audience of one, or the act of "talking to self." For example, at the lower elementary levels, the teacher's concern is for the child's development of sensory discriminations, the child's concept of self as a person and as a communicator, and recognition of personal feelings and emotions. By the upper elementary years, students are "talking to themselves" about the reasons for their behavior, developing a sense of personal responsibility, evaluating their own communications, and increasing in confidence. Beginning with middle school through high school, intrapersonal communication instruction usually focuses on such ideas as developing a concept of choice and making decisions, identifying communication strengths and weaknesses, and managing emotions.

In recent years, teachers have begun to focus more attention on the intrapersonal communication needs of students beyond the traditional concept of "overcoming stage fright." However, it should be pointed out that the speech teacher usually is not trained in counseling and must carefully and cautiously develop instructional strategies in this area. Persons with little counseling background probably should not focus instruction on intrapersonal behavior.

Interpersonal communications

Interpersonal communication most commonly refers to communication between two people in situations ranging from intimate (husband-wife communications, for example) to formal settings like an employment interview. Typical activities include conversations, negotiations, and interviews. Interaction is face-to-face and characterized by immediate responses (feedback). Because of the closeness and immediacy of interpersonal interactions, nonverbal behavior and language use are particularly important variables.

At the elementary level, attention is often focused on developing confidence in conversing, sharing interests and feelings, gaining attention in appropriate ways, and using cultural courtesies. For students in middle and high school grades, interpersonal relationships and communication have become critically important. Students should be taught those skills needed to develop and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, particularly initiating and maintaining conversations, providing supportive communication, using appropriate social norms, experiencing a variety of role behaviors, and constructively managing competition/conflict and power/status relationships.

Greater attention is being given to instruction in interpersonal communication today than several years ago. Unfortunately, a few abuses which used questionable sensitivity exercises delayed public acceptance of interpersonal skills instruction in many communities. Although the potential for abuse still exists, the interpersonal communication approach is relevant to student needs, and teachers can bring about significant improvement in communication behavior by focusing instruction on two-person relationships.

Group communications

Although interpersonal communication focuses generally on two participants, and group communication on three to seven or eight, numbers alone are not the most important distinguishing characteristic between the two "audiences." For example, interpersonal may refer to more than two people in some situations. A more significant, distinguishing characteristic is the concept of "networking" as it applies to groups. Networking refers to the structure of relationships within a group, particularly *directionality*, *frequency*, and *subgrouping*. Directionality can be defined as, "Who talks to whom." Frequency is counting the number of communicative "acts" each participant produces, and subgrouping is a situation in which people "pair up" in the group. Isolated, these terms have little meaning, but when combined and used to analyze a group, some important group characteristics and behaviors are revealed.

For example, assume that there is a class discussion group consisting of Jack, Bill, Ruth, Ken, and Amy. Ken has the highest frequency (talks the most), and more comments are addressed to him than anyone else. Whether or not Ken has been designated as leader, he is, in fact, the dominant person in the group and exerts influence over the other members. Also, Bill and Amy speak only to each other. This "pairing" may or may not create group problems, but the potential is there for divisiveness. Jack hardly talks to anyone, contributing little to the group; and before long, he may drop out.

Although simplistic, this analysis demonstrates a way by which teachers and students can discover potential or actual problems that could interfere with achieving group goals.

Group situations include families, peer groups, athletic teams, and committees. Generally, the elementary teacher is concerned about students participating in peer groups, experiencing leadership situations, and participating in class discussions. Some attention is given to beginning to resolve problems in groups and investigating topics for discussion.

In middle school and high school, interpersonal communication studies tend to focus on relationships while group communication becomes more concerned with problemsolving activities. Typical instructional objectives focus on student abilities to develop an idea, summarize and synthesize, assume appropriate leadership, and evaluate group decisions.

Since group activities are important to many classes, regardless of subject area, teachers have a built-in opportunity to teach group communication skills at the same time. In fact, a problem many teachers face when making group assignments is that students focus on the product (class presentation, report, etc.) and waste a great deal of time in group sessions. Frequently, one or two conscientious students will generate the product while the rest "socialize." Consequently, students learn to dislike group projects. Teachers who focus instructional efforts on the group communication process, as well as the group product, substantially improve the quality of group assignments as an educational experience.

Public communication

Traditionally, this audience situation has been defined as a public speaking activity. Other forms of public communication include debates, lectures, court deliberations, legislative deliberations, readings, and theatrical presentations.

Public audiences range in number (from fewer than 12 to hundreds) and gather in a single location for a specific communication event. There is less direct interaction and feedback between a public audience and presenter than there is in interpersonal or group settings.

Although formal instruction in presentational techniques is questionable at the elementary level, younger students do benefit from opportunities to talk in a variety of public settings, and develop poise. Particularly valuable are experiences in storytelling and dramatic activities which stimulate imagination and pleasure in the learning process. Such activities continue to serve useful purposes through high school. By middle school, however, students are ready to develop more specific public communication skills, like preparing messages for public audiences, using effective vocal and physical presentation skills, and sustaining and focusing attention as audience members. There are many, more specific presentational abilities that can be taught effectively to secondary students. Most teachers, at least, can provide constructive criticism which would help students improve public performance skills.

A major difference between teaching public communication behaviors and interpersonal/group communication behaviors is that the former results in a "product," the latter involves constantly changing interactions (a process). "Products" are observable and relatively easy to measure (e.g., audibility, frequency of "uhs," eye contact, etc.). We have the capability to make prescriptive statements about public speeches which do seem to make a difference in audience response. On the other hand, "process" is not only more difficult to observe and measure, but, even using various process analysis devices, it is difficult to make specific prescriptive statements which result in more effective communication in any but the most general sense.

This may be a major reason why so many secondary speech courses are public speaking classes. Public speaking skills are easier to teach, and we know more about these skills than those necessary in other forms of communication. Public speaking instruction can be "technique specific." However, this strength is a problem if the teacher's focus is on developing abilities to produce a product useful only in limited situations.

Media communications

Media communication settings are those situations in which the audience members are physically separated, not only from the message source, but also frequently from each other. Such communications require specialized transmission devices. Newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film, and telephone are examples of media through which messages are communicated.

Although media have a tremendous impact on the public and constitute

the dominant forms of communication activities, elementary and secondary school programs seldom include any instruction in media communication. At the least, however, elementary school children should feel comfortable with various media instruments, understand the varied transmission processes (how radio and television work, for example), be able to distinguish between media fantasy and reality, and identify the functions and purposes of a number of media communications (such as commercial advertising).

Since people mainly interact with media as audiences or consumers of media communication, it would be appropriate for secondary classes to emphasize media consumption rather than production. Student instruction might focus on examining how media influence, the effects of a medium on a message, how messages are adapted for differing media, and making critical judgments about media.

Most people are fascinated with media equipment. However, as noted regarding public communication, teachers should be careful about focusing on equipment and "products" rather than on the communication process.

The audience approach to teaching oral communication provides teachers with relatively clear and discrete categories and readily observable communication settings. Disadvantages include the tendency to focus on specific products in some settings and the difficulty in covering all audience settings effectively within a limited time frame. Nevertheless, this approach, when focused on process and limited in scope, can be very useful for focusing instruction, particularly when combined with another approach, such as function. For example, programs which are developed for several grade levels might move the focus from intra/interpersonal to groups to public and media settings, thus moving the child from a close to an increasingly broad world of communication audience situations.

Interpersonal role-playing exercise

Purpose: This assignment focuses on interpersonal communication. (Note that the informational interview assignment focused on function; this exercise focuses on interpersonal relationships.)

Objectives: This exercise should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- sharing and experiencing attitudes and feelings;
- experiencing a variety of role behaviors;
- identifying ways to improve his/her own interpersonal relationships; and
- constructively managing conflict and power/status relationships.

Materials: The teacher should prepare multiple copies of each of the role descriptions. Following is an example of the kind of role-playing situations which could be developed.

Greenspun Landscaping

General Description: Bill is applying for a summer job with Greenspun Landscaping. Mr. Greenspun has advertised for a crew leader whose job will be to supervise a crew of three or four other teenagers doing general maintenance tasks (weeding, pruning, raking, planting, mowing, etc.). Greenspun's business has been growing because of word-of-mouth advertising about the work crews' neatness and dependability. Bill has never been a supervisor but has worked for a similar business as a laborer for two summers.

Mr. Greenspun: Your business has been built upon providing dependable service, but dependable help is difficult to find. Your policy has been to hire high school boys at $3.35 an hour, guarantee them 40 hours of work per week, and hire one supervisor for every crew. The supervisor is expected to do manual work with the crew but also to see to it that the job is done properly and the place left in a manner pleasing to the client. You have been paying supervisors $4 an hour. They must have had previous experience, be dependable, and have leadership abilities.

Your advertising for the positions has produced 10 inquiries, 4 of whom showed up for an interview, but none was really acceptable. A competing firm pays its supervisors $5 an hour, but you cannot afford that rate. You might be able to pay $4.40 for the right person rather than keep paying for the job advertisement.

Bill: You know that not many teenagers with your experience are willing to weed and do the other tasks through the heat of the summer. You are also aware that a competing firm pays $5 an hour to its supervisors, but your transportation to that company would cost you money as well as an extra half hour travel time at each end of the working day. Your only other job possibility at this time is as a fast-food restaurant worker at $3.35 an hour for only 30 hours of guaranteed work each week. Nevertheless, you feel you would be a good supervisor and ought to be earning at least $4.60 an hour.

Other role-playing exercises should include family, school, and peer-group situations. Since the purpose of the exercises is to focus on interpersonal communication behaviors, a variety of situations is particularly useful.

Procedures: This exercise should be preceded by a discussion of interper-

sonal communications, particularly understanding others' viewpoints and the need for adapting one's communication behaviors. The teacher should explain the exercise to the class, and everyone should be given a copy of the general description. The student assuming Bill's role is the only one to receive the description of Bill's situation. The student playing Mr. Greenspun is the only one to receive that description. Neither is to discuss the role with the other. Give the students a few minutes to read and think about their roles, then let them play out the situation. At the conclusion of the role-playing, the whole class should discuss what they observed about each role-player's communication behaviors (including nonverbal behaviors).

It is desirable that as many different role-playing situations be played as possible within a reasonable amount of class time and with as many students participating as are willing to do so. Followup activities might include showing videotaped examples of interpersonal communication problems and listing communication behaviors that seem to be most effective in different interpersonal situations.

Grading: Assessing this experience for grading is not only difficult but is probably inappropriate. Students' interpersonal communication strengths and weaknesses can be identified but should not be judged.

Classroom Setting: Arranging students into a circle or "U" shape encourages a more spontaneous interaction during discussion of the exercise and enables everyone to observe the role-playing interactions.

Subject Areas: This exercise would be most suitable for classes in psychology, some home economics courses, and speech.

Public presentation assignment

Purpose: This assignment focuses on adapting messages for differing audience situations.

Objectives: This assignment should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- analyzing audience differences;
- adapting messages for differing audiences;
- adapting physical and vocal forms of expression for differing performance situations;
- responding to audience feedback; and
- determining the effectiveness of the presentation.

Materials: The teacher should prepare a handout detailing assignment objectives, procedures, and grading basis.

Procedure: Each student is required to select a single topic for a 2-3 minute speech for two distinctly different audiences. For example, a student might choose to discuss basic first-aid procedure with an elementary classroom and a group of senior citizens. Another may elect to talk about auto maintenance with a group of auto mechanics and a driver's education class. The teacher should approve each subject and set of audience choices to ensure that the two forms of the speech will involve substantial differences in content and/or delivery. Some class time should be devoted to talking generally about audience adaptation and to discussing with each student his/her specific topics and audiences. The actual speeches should be presented back-to-back so that the class and teacher observations can focus on differences between the two presentations.

Variations of this assignment could involve videotaping the speeches, delivering them before actual audiences, or converting the oral presentations into written forms. Students might be required, also, to submit a written analysis of their two audiences.

Grading: Assessing presentations should focus on the effectiveness/appropriateness of the differences in language use and presentation of information for different audiences. Attention should also be given to the delivery of each speech.

Classroom Setting: Formal speaker/audience style.

Subject Areas: Variations of this assignment would be useful in any course which emphasizes varying audiences, including English, speech, journalism, and some business and vocational courses.

SKILLS APPROACH

No matter which approach is used to teach oral communication, almost all teachers will also be teaching skills. The Basic Skills Improvement Program established by Congress and implemented by most State boards of education, for example, has focused attention on oral communication skills as basic tools of learning. Since the teacher of basic skills is usually concerned with student mastery of a specific set of skills within a given period (for example, addition and subtraction, sentence construction, or message organization), that teacher is likely to consider structuring communication instruction in the same way.

Oral communication is a complex process, and as such requires the effective use of a wide range of skill behaviors. Because of the number and variety of specific communication skills involved, we must make decisions about which skills to teach and when it is appropriate to expect mastery. To help teachers with this task, The Speech Communication Association Project Task Force has organized skills (ways that we use language as tools) according to 1) how we decide to select a specific communication act from our reper-

toire of experiences, 2) how we implement the act chosen, and 3) how we evaluate the effectiveness of that act. Consequently, the instructional focus would be on repertoire selection, implementation, and evaluation.

However, this category system is somewhat difficult for many to use as a system for structuring instruction. For example, it may be necessary that students have many communication experiences (repertoire), but are these experiences skills to be taught or opportunities to be provided? A similar category system, which may be easier to use, describes those skills necessary for analyzing the situation, developing and delivering messages, receiving and responding to messages, and evaluating messages. In either case, it is important not to present these as sequential steps in a process, but as different parts of a problemsolving process.

- **Analyzing the situation**. These skills are primarily required in observing and hypothesizing about the persons involved, the setting, the idea or thought to be communicated, and the purposes to be fulfilled through communication.

- **Developing and delivering messages**. These skills are related to those problemsolving activities associated with gathering information, structuring and composing messages, establishing credibility, using language effectively, and using appropriate physical and vocal expression.

- **Receiving and responding to messages**. A common teacher complaint is that students do not listen, yet practically no direct instruction in receiving and responding (listening and feedback) occurs at any level in schools. Some of this lack of attention can be attributed to the paucity of research into the relationships between specific behaviors and "effective" listening. Another major problem is that there are few observable behaviors which can be associated with listening. Nevertheless, listening and responding to messages are behaviors critical to the communication process and deserve focused attention.

- **Evaluating messages**. This set of skills focuses attention on assessing the impact of messages and making judgments about those messages. We ought to be particularly concerned about providing constructive criticism, judging effectiveness of decisions/solutions, examining the honesty and integrity of messages/sources, and developing standards for making judgments about the quality of differing forms of communication.

Although there is renewed interest in providing basic skills instruction, skills associated with the activities approaches have been a part of most communica-

tion instruction for years. The skills approach is particularly useful in developing sequenced and integrated educational programs. For example, skills can be developed along a continuum ranging from simple to sophisticated and complex communication behaviors. Skills can be taught in a wide variety of subject areas and structured by district staffs into the general curriculum.

The basic skills approach, however, is not as practical when used as the sole focus of instruction. The categories are not sequential in the same way as the audience approach, nor are these categories discrete. The *skills approach seems most useful when used with a combination of other approaches.*

Teachers have concerns involving teaching basic skills, expectations, and mastery. Mastery, for example, may imply either that every student should become proficient as a communicator or achieve a minimal level of competency. This is related to levels of expectation. Must every student meet a standard level of expectations? An appropriate answer, of course, lies between extremes. In mathematics, for example, students are provided opportunities to develop as many mathematic skills as possible. While one high school student may be studying calculus, another of the same age is attempting to master basic computation skills. We should offer the same opportunity for each student to improve his or her communication proficiency regardless of existing levels of ability.

As a result of the Basic Skills Improvement Program, a wealth of materials has been developed which describe specific skills most students can be expected to "master." In some cases, these skills are discussed from a developmental perspective (moving from simple to more complex forms of the same behavioral categories). States in which curriculum materials have been developed for oral communication instruction include Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia. Several other States have begun the process of developing such materials as well.

An employment interview exercise

Purpose: This exercise focuses on developing student interviewing skills.

Objectives: The exercise should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- identifying and using verbal and nonverbal cues;
- using appropriate eye contact;
- speaking clearly and audibly;
- questioning to obtain information and improve understanding;
- recognizing impact of personal appearance; and
- researching career options and related businesses.

Materials: The teacher should prepare a handout describing the purpose of the assignment and detailing requirements, grading basis, and dates for the interviews.

Procedures: This exercise works particularly well when it follows a unit or written report on career opportunities. Students select a career and research such related variables as employment trends, prevailing wages, advancement opportunities, educational requirements, and so on. Meanwhile, the teacher makes arrangements with representatives from the various career fields and requests that they contribute an hour of time to conduct mock interviews with two to three students in the classroom.

Students are informed of the person who will be interviewing them and the business the interviewer represents. The students are to prepare as though the exercise would be an actual job interview (for example, developing questions, preparing a resume, dressing appropriately). During the interview hour, the interviewer conducts brief interviews with each student and then discusses each person's interviewing skills.

This exercise uses a great deal of class time for the actual interviews, so it should be considered a major assignment. An alternative plan might be developed in which students are interviewed whenever time is available, and the interview is videotaped. The teacher, then, could play back highlights or portions of selected interviews to the class. Another plan might involve multiple interviews being conducted in different rooms with only a few occurring in the class. In any case, every student should participate in an interview and followup evaluation.

Grading: Students can be graded on research activities (notes or written report), and the interviewers can rate each student on a scale. However, although this is a major activity, it is more an educational experience than a testing device.

Classroom Setting: Interviews conducted in class require a mock office setup and arrangement of chairs which permits everyone to observe interactions. This assignment requires a great deal of advanced planning and "leg work" on the part of the teacher. Less work is required the second year, however, since most of the interviewers will be willing to do it again. The preliminary work can also be reduced for the teacher if this is done as a cooperative activity with the guidance office or appropriate teachers or staff.

A demonstration speech

Purpose: This assignment focuses on developing student public speaking skills.

Objectives: The speech should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- speaking clearly and audibly before an audience;
- using models or other objects to enhance and clarify the subject of a speech;
- developing poise and confidence in speaking before an audience;
- organizing and limiting a speech topic;
- using appropriate physical expression; and
- using appropriate eye contact.

Materials: Each student is to provide the model or object being demonstrated. They should be informed about not violating any school regulations (firearms, for example) and using common sense (not bringing a motorcycle into class). It is helpful to require that students' topics and demonstration models be approved in advance.

The teacher should provide each student with a handout detailing the requirements and grade basis for the assignment.

Procedure: Each student selects a speech topic and prepares the presentation out of class. (The teacher can check on progress periodically.) Each presentation should be 3-5 minutes and delivered in class without using notes. Presentations can be followed by a brief question-and-answer period and oral evaluation of the speech by the teacher and class.

It is always helpful to provide students with a model presentation in advance, either a demonstration speech by the teacher or a videotaped example of a speech from another class.

Grading: Each presentation can be evaluated on a rating sheet filled out by the teacher and students selected randomly from the class. The rating sheet should include each category listed in the assignment objectives.

Classroom Setting: Audience seating.

Subject Areas: Although this assignment focuses specifically on personal presentational skills, it would be useful in any class which is "equipment heavy," for example, machine shop, woodworking, science, and office equipment classes.

ACTIVITIES APPROACH

The activities approach to teaching oral communication might be characterized by public speaking. Instruction focuses on providing students

with opportunities to practice and perform numerous activities presumed to be similar to those communication activities that one will use in other contexts. A list of activities could include self-perception exercises, interviews, negotiations, conversations, discussions, panels, lectures, informative and persuasive speeches, demonstration speeches, interpretative readings, and broadcast scripting and programming.

The functional approach focuses on communication purposes, consequently instructional activities would be designed to help students learn the means by which specific purposes are accomplished. The audience approach focuses on numbers of people, so we are concerned about students understanding communication as an interactive process. The skills approach instructs in technique. The activities approach, on the other hand, focuses teacher and student attention on specific acts or products.

A variation of the activities approach is the *types of speech* approach. Rather than presenting a wide range of activities (public speaking, group discussion, interpretative readings), this approach selects a general activity and focuses on a number of specific variations of that activity. For example, public speaking instruction might examine the speech to inform, the speech of praise, the eulogy, the argumentative speech, the persuasive speech, the visual aid speech, the speech to entertain, and so on.

An examination of the kinds of activities included in this approach strongly suggests that they represent several of the audiences described in the audience approach. Interviews, group discussions, and public speaking, for example, might correspond to interpersonal, group, and public audience settings. A second, or topics approach, represents a variety of functions met by a given activity. The speech to inform, the argumentative or persuasive speech, the speech to entertain, and the eulogy correspond to informing, controlling, feeling, and ritualizing. In this sense, the activities approach is indistinguishable from the audience or the function approach to teaching oral communication.

Furthermore, the activities approach emphasizes developing some degree of performance proficiency which requires using numerous skills. Public speaking, for example, requires analysis, organizational, language usage, delivery, and evaluation skills. In this approach, skill instruction is presented at the same time as performances are developed and assessed.

Probably the best examples of using the activities approach in many schools are the forensics and theatre extracurricular programs. Forensics includes such activities as debating, extemporaneous speaking, original oratory, original comedy, and prose and verse interpretation. Theatre productions may include chamber theatre and readers theatre as well as musical comedy and drama. Although the emphasis appears to be on the performance or production, most of the instructional efforts of the forensics coach or theatre director are focused on developing those skills necessary to produce a successful product.

Perhaps the only real difference that would occur in using the activities approach is one of focus and emphasis. A combination of audience, function, and/or skill approaches with the use of activities will shift focus away

from a product to the process, whereas using the activities approach alone might emphasize the product.

The reader can tap many sources which will provide more than adequate information about activities and types of communication. Textbooks in interpersonal communication, group discussion, public speaking, oral interpretation, and media, for example, will discuss varied types of activity as well as activities associated with diverse audiences. The ERIC TRIP booklets, by Barbara Sundene Wood, describe several activities associated with functions, and the Illinois Basic Oral Communication Skills booklet indicates activities that can be used to develop specific skills.

"A conversation with . . . " activity

Purpose: This assignment focuses on using two-person conversations to dramatize course-related concepts and information.

Objectives: The interview exercise should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- developing confidence and poise in conversations;
- developing and sustaining a topic of conversation;
- using conversational skills; and
- researching a topic area for discussion.

Materials: No specific materials are necessary, although it would be a good idea to distribute a handout describing the activity, listing deadlines, and indicating grade basis.

Procedure: This activity works well when conducted as an ongoing assignment in the class rather than as an activity concentrated in a limited period. The teacher should prepare the topic areas well in advance by outlining key concepts to be taught in the course and naming persons closely associated with those concepts. For example, in an American literature class, the teacher might develop a course outline focusing on types of literature, major literary periods, and representative authors of each type and period. The science teacher might develop an outline identifying a series of related scientific principles and the theorists who developed the principles.

Early in the course, students are paired and assigned the task of developing a formal conversation between the interviewer and a famous person associated with a specific event or topic. One of the assignments in the American literature class might be "A Conversation With Edgar Allen Poe," describing his development of the detective story. Another pair might be assigned to perform "A Conversation With Walt Whitman," and so on. Each

pair is to decide who will be the host interviewer and who will be the famous guest.

The team is to thoroughly research the subject and the guest with whom the conversation is to be held. It is also helpful to provide students with model conversations, such as videotaped models from previous classes, Barbara Walters or Dick Cavett television interviews, or a model conversation for the class in cooperation with another teacher. Student performance dates are scheduled throughout the school term (allow sufficient time for the first team of discussants to prepare for the assignment) to coincide with the introduction of each concept, unit of study, and so on. Most of the preparation is done out of class, but the teacher will want to check periodically with each pair on the progress of the assignment.

Grading: Assessment should focus on the "quality" and content of the conversations. Various quality measures could include sustaining audience attention and interest, smoothness of the performances, audibility, poise, and effective use of time. Content should be judged on such criteria as thoroughness, relevance, and accuracy. End-of-term awards for best performance, best use of humor, etc., by student vote should not be a part of the grade, but can stimulate enthusiasm for the project.

Classroom Setting: Since the conversations will probably be held while the participants are seated, the classroom should be rearranged into a double row, semicircle to enable everyone to observe (and reduce "back-of-the-audience" distraction).

Subject Areas: This activity, when done well and with a touch of appropriate humor, can focus attention and stimulate interest in many different courses, including history, science, literature, art, theatre, various vocational courses, and home economics.

Oral reading programs

Purpose: This assignment focuses on preparing and performing a 10-15 minute oral reading program. (This is a difficult assignment and may be most appropriate for junior or senior level classes.)

Objectives: This assignment should provide each student with the opportunity and responsibility for:

- analyzing literature and literary themes;
- editing material for oral performance;
- selecting and combining a variety of literary materials with a central theme; and
- scripting, rehearsing, and performing a group reading program.

Materials: In addition to a handout detailing the specifics of the assignment, a wide variety of literary materials, as well as sources for additional materials, should be available to students. A model performance will help students prepare for their own performances. Such models could be videotaped from previous classes or live performances by high school forensics or readers or theatre students.

Procedure: Students should be assigned to groups of five to seven. Each group is to select a theme and secure various literary materials using that theme. One group, for example, might select love and collect poems, dramatic monologues and dialogues, and prose passages which discuss some aspect of love. Another group might select baseball, and a third might choose movies.

Students are to write scripts incorporating the literary materials as well as an appropriate introduction, transitions, and a conclusion. The scripts should be structured so that the performance has continuity and such dramatic elements as builds, contrasts, and pacing. A student from each group should serve as director during rehearsal periods.

Although students can collect materials individually and work together out of class, both script preparation time and some rehearsal time should be scheduled during classes. The script writing time is not a problem, as it can be handled like any other group writing assignment. Rehearsals can be a problem, however, since no group will want to be observed by the rest of the class. An occasional, brief rehearsal with the teacher during a common "open hour" or after school may be the best alternative. Rehearsals need not be long or extended over a period since students will be "reading" from the scripts during the actual performance.

Grading: Evaluation of each group's performance should focus on 1) the script, including appropriateness of literature, editing, continuity, introduction and conclusion, transitions, and relevance to theme; and 2) presentational skills, including physical expression and vocal expression.

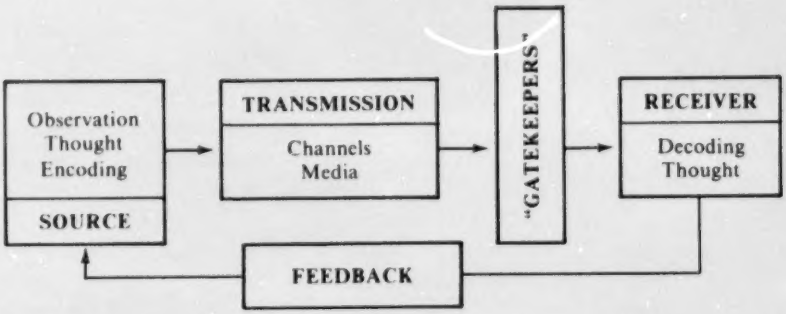
Classroom Setting: Although a classroom can be used for performances, an actual theatre or small auditorium is more appropriate and enhances the "importance" of the performance.

OTHER APPROACHES

In addition to the several approaches to teaching communication already mentioned or described, two other approaches are occasionally used to focus instruction. These are the *contexts* approach and the *model* approach. Context focuses on communication audiences, functions, skills, and activities as they occur in a specific setting. Several examples of context-related instruction include organizational communication, business communication, family communication, political communication, and religious communication. The context approach relates primarily to specific subject areas such as

business programs, seminaries, and political science. Career communication classes at the secondary level assume a context emphasis. Some attention to these varying contexts is not only appropriate but is important in developing communication proficiency. A public speech prepared for business persons would differ significantly from one presented at a church conference or PTA meeting. Nevertheless, the focus of communication courses is on function, audience, activity, and skill, regardless of the context.

The model approach to oral communication instruction is seldom seen in secondary level courses although units focusing on the communication model may be a part of a speech class. This approach examines the communication process as a model of that process. For example:



Typical instruction might examine skills of observation, the role of gatekeepers in communication, or transmission technologies. Mostly however, the models approach is of greatest use for specialized courses of speech instruction and/or development of theoretical principles.

Analysis of communication contexts

Purpose: This assignment focuses on the discovery of communication behaviors within specific contexts.

Objectives: The assignment should provide each student with an opportunity and responsibility for:

- developing interview skills;
- using techniques for questioning;
- developing a plan for securing information;
- identifying the effect of context upon communication; and
- interpreting information and organizing a report.

Materials: The teacher should distribute a handout detailing assignment requirements, procedures, and grading basis.

Procedure: Each student is to select a context in which communication regularly occurs as a significant part of the organization's activities. Contexts could include judicial court proceedings, local retail stores, local church operations, an industry, counseling service organizations, senior citizen housing administration, real estate office, and so on. The student is to arrange for interviews with appropriate persons associated with the selected organization and secure information about:

- the relative percentage of working time devoted to oral communication activities;
- the percentage of communication time spent in one-on-one, group, and large-audience communications;
- the effect and use of media on the job;
- examples and extent of various functional forms of communication (e.g., informing, persuading) associated with the organization;
- major communication activities; and
- communication skills required on the job.

Interview results should be organized into a written or oral report.

A good followup activity to the assignment would be to chart the communications characteristic of the various organizations/contexts represented. In addition to the educational benefits of the interview and analysis processes, the assignment can also dramatize the extent to which oral communication is a major and essential activity in most organizations.

Grading: Assessment should be based on thoroughness of the analysis included in the written/oral report, as well as on the report itself.

Classroom Setting: The regular setting is appropriate for this activity.

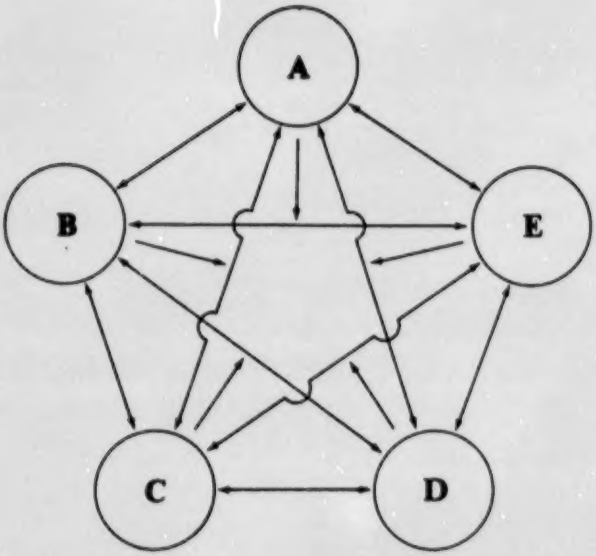
Small-group communication analysis

Purpose: This assignment focuses on student analyses of the communication processes in functioning groups.

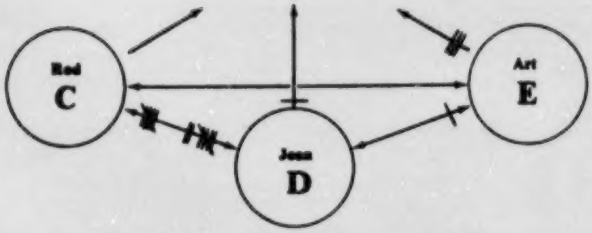
Objectives: Small-group analysis provides each student with an opportunity and responsibility for:

- developing observational skills;
- using a methodology for observing and analyzing communication behaviors in small groups;
- interpreting data and effects of communication behaviors;
- making logical inferences about communication behaviors; and
- identifying nonverbal and contextual cues.

Materials: Each student will need several copies of the "tally" sheet and a handout detailing the specifics of the assignment. A typical tally sheet might look like this (example is greatly reduced):



The student observer enters a name for each group member and a tally mark for each communicative act observed. For example:



In the preceding example, Art (l) addressed three comments to the whole group (short arrow) and one comment to Joan (arrow between Art and Joan). Joan did not respond to Art. Joan (2) addressed one comment to the group and seven comments to Rod. Rod (3) responded or addressed five comments to Joan. Using this tally sheet tells us who talks to whom (directionality and subgrouping) and gives us a count (frequency) of the total communication acts engaged in by each member (Rod = 5, Joan = 8, Art = 4).

Procedure: Each student selects a functioning group to observe, such as the family, a student government committee, a peer group, the school board, and so on. The student is to observe the group and, unobtrusively, enter the appropriate tally marks. The teacher should draw one or two example tally sheets on the blackboard and discuss how the "results" could be interpreted with the class. Each student then interprets his or her tally sheets and either submits a written report or makes an oral presentation on the results.

Grading: Assessment is based on completing the assignment, accuracy of interpretation, thoroughness of interpretation, and effectiveness of the written or oral report.

Classroom Setting: The regular setting is appropriate.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

For many years, public perceptions of speech instruction were somewhat limited to such public presentations as speeches and debates. Speech teachers, themselves, focused on these speech-making activities. During the past 25 years, however, the influence of the electronic media, the growth of group

and committee activities, and concern about interpersonal relationships have led to a new, broadened concept of differing audiences. Accompanying these changes has been a renewed focus on the purposes (functions) of communication and the national competencies movement.

Consequently, those charged with incorporating oral communication instruction into existing classes or with creating new courses appear to be faced with the demanding tasks of 1) trying to understand what oral communication is "all about" and 2) making decisions about which of the approaches would be best to use. These tasks are difficult, even for the experienced speech teacher.

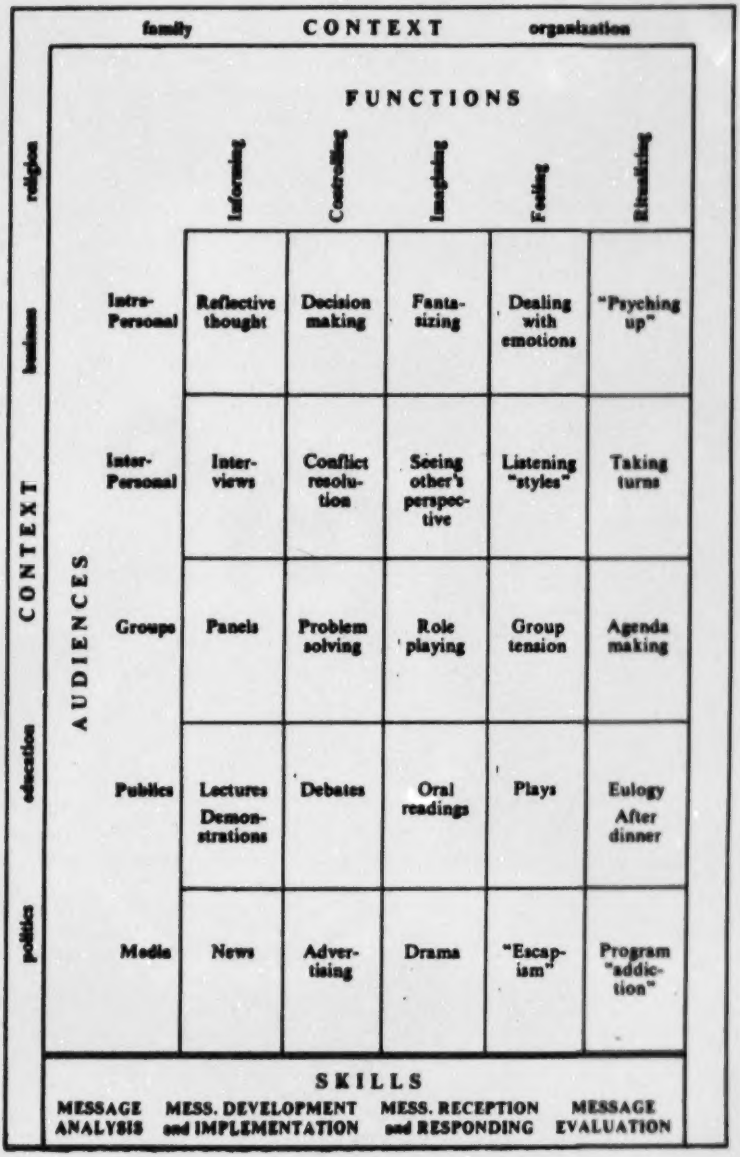
Assume, however, that the goal is not only to teach the purposes of speech, audience variables, selected speech acts, or specific communication skills. Rather, let us assume that the goal is to bring about an increased awareness of the pervasiveness and importance of oral communication as well as increased skill in communicating. If this is the case, the task is to develop instructional plans by which we can *integrate* the concepts and skills associated with communication functions, audiences, activities, contexts, and skills: What can I borrow and implement from each of these approaches which can be integrated into what I am already doing? In theory and in practice, few of us should focus attention, or our students' attention, on only one approach to learning about communication.

The following diagram illustrates some of the relationships that exist among the differing approaches described in the booklet. It was included with some trepidation, since it might be more confusing than helpful. Hopefully, however, the diagram will provide readers with an overview of all of these approaches and a clearer understanding as to why any single approach to studying communication will ignore a substantial part of the whole. The diagram's essential components include:

- **Contexts**—All communication occurs in a context—at home, in school, in the legislature, on the job. We participate in a variety of communication activities for various purposes with many different people. Effective communication in each context depends on using specific skills or behavior.

- **Skills**—All communication requires that we use specific analytical, developmental, implementation, and evaluation skills. These skills may vary but are essential, regardless of the context, function, audience, or activity.

- **Audiences, functions, and activities**—We engage in particular communicative activities with particular people for certain purposes, regardless of the context. And we can only be effective as communicators if we use the appropriate skills.


CONTEXT
family
organization
religion
business
education
politics
CONTEXT
FUNCTIONS
Informing
Controlling
Imagining
Feeling
Ritualizing
AUDIENCES
Intra-Personal
Reflective thought
Decision making
Fantasizing
Dealing with emotions
"Psyching up"
Inter-Personal
Interviews
Conflict resolution
Seeing other's perspective
Listening "styles"
Taking turns
Groups
Panels
Problem solving
Role playing
Group tension
Agenda making
Publics
Lectures
Demonstrations
Debates
Oral readings
Plays
Eulogy
After dinner
Media
News
Advertising
Drama
"Escapism"
Program "addiction"
SKILLS
MESSAGE ANALYSIS
MESS. DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION
MESS. RECEPTION and RESPONDING
MESSAGE EVALUATION

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  Charles Suhor

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